

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

THE Albert Pier at Portsea, now completed, is expected to confer many advantages on the town. Even in a sanitary point of view, the healthy promenade which it opens up is dwelt on by the district papers as of itself a blessing. Other improvements in connection with it, such as the erection of a suitable hotel, &c., have been suggested.—A dispute has arisen at Southampton between the sewers and highways committee and the surveyor for paving, lighting, and sewerage to the board, respecting the expenses of the inspection and repair of sewers, which the committee allege might have been avoided by proper vigilance in preventing the introduction of improper materials and negligent workmanship. The surveyor, Mr. Dowell, replies as he conceives satisfactorily to the implied charge against him, but after a service of thirty-six years under the pavement board, rendered his resignation of the sewers surveyorship, which was finally accepted by a majority of 7 to 3, 2 neutral.—The foundation-stone of the new Roman Catholic chapel at the Cistercian Convent, Staplehill, near Wimborne, Dorset, was laid on the 25th ult. The design of this small edifice will be early Gothic, similar in character to that of several other churches planned by the same architect, Mr. C. Hanson, and in course of erection in different parts of the country.—The Dean and Chapter of Bristol Cathedral have given orders to Mr. Bell, an artist in stained glass, to restore the east window, which was injured by Cromwell's soldiers, and patched up at the 'restoration.' It is to be hoped that due care will be taken.—The foundation-stone of the nave arcade of Rotherfield Greys new district church was laid on Whit-Tuesday with all due parade, but the work was undone with very little ceremony through the ensuing night, and the coins abstracted,—by some new order of antiquaries, no doubt, interested in such deposits, and curious to ascertain the exact nature and value of the contents of the bottle containing them. Whether the high sheriff and the magistrates who headed the first procession intend to repeat the ceremony is not stated, but doubtless they will endeavour to do all due justice to the diligent antiquarian who has brought it to so lame and impotent a conclusion, if they catch him, as it is to be hoped they will. The architect is Mr. B. Ferrey.—At the Bedfordshire sessions a discussion lately arose as to the desirableness of having a new bridge in preference to repairing the old one, known as Harrold-bridge. The surveyor was eventually instructed, under certain contingencies, to cause a new bridge to be proceeded with; otherwise to repair the old one in the meantime. An estimate of 2,980*l.* for the erection of an iron bridge, by Messrs. Barwell, —the only one received,—was conditionally accepted.—Public baths are about to be erected at Colchester from a design by Mr. Penrice, the necessary funds having been raised by subscription.—Extensive repairs and restorations are in progress in the chapel of Magdalen College, Cambridge, and the plan of the original structure of the edifice has been revealed, though many of the original enrichments have been destroyed. The original character of the building is to be restored to a great extent, and modern decorations removed.—Advertisements of the proposal for erecting a church in the district of St. Paul's, Derby, have been issued.—The Improvement Commissioners at Wolverhampton have at length resolved to authorize the New Cattle Market Committee to complete the purchase of the site (25,773 square yards for 6,760*l.*), and to proceed as soon as possible with the erection of the market. The meeting was afterwards horrified with a medical report on the "filthy state of those very questionable settlements known as Caribbee Islands and Cole's Croft," and it was determined that the state of the drains and night-soil deposits should be forthwith looked to.—On Saturday week the architect and builder of the South Staffordshire General Hospital at Wolverhampton feasted 80 and upwards of the workmen, who have covered in one wing of the building.—The bailers at Stourbridge lately met to resolve on a strike, but a majority determined otherwise.—Another boiler-bursting case has just occurred, whereby thirteen workmen, at the Pontnewydd Iron Works, have been seriously injured. The

boiler was an old worn-out one, which a proper inspector, such as we have so often advocated, the necessity of appointing, would not have allowed for one moment to endanger life and property; in some places it is said to have been thinner than the sixteenth of an inch! As for the damage of property, estimated at 1,000*l.*, besides loss of profit by stoppage of the works for a month, there is probably little to regret where so much appears to have been risked in the attempt to take so great and far too long continued a profit out of a used up article, which ought to have long before given place to a new one, however considerable the expense; but the personal injury to so many poor workmen, and the serious loss of employment to so many more are deeply to be deplored. Such evils, however, will probably go on, how much longer it would be hard to tell, unless, indeed, some stray bishop or another should happen to be 'devoted' to the boiling or scalding process in some decided case of boiler explosion, while another is being roasted by railway combustion, for behoof of all and sundry suffering lieges.—The new landing stage at Liverpool, was launched on Tuesday week, and successfully transplanted into its destined place. The tonnage of this handy piece of workmanship is 16,000, and the area of the deck which is 508 feet long, and 82 feet wide, is 4,467 square yards, cost 50,000*l.* expense of working 1,500*l.* per annum exclusive of repairs. There is a light-house, at each end with powerful reflectors. The stage is to be connected with the pier by two iron bridges 150 feet long and 17 feet wide, one for ascent the other for descent. Mr. Cubitt is preparing these.—The foundation-stone of the entrance lodge of the new cemetery at Hull was laid on Wednesday week.—The Hartlepool West Harbour and Docks were opened on that day. These important works were begun in January, 1845. The size of the harbour (which is inclosed by two bold stone piers) is about fourteen acres; the dock, eight acres, with quay walls on every side, and capable of accommodating between eighty and ninety large vessels afloat. The entrance gate is 42 feet in breadth. The dock is lighted with gas, and there are water-pipes on all sides constantly affording an unlimited supply. The staiths were constructed by Messrs. George Brown and Brothers, of Stockton. The engineers of the dock and harbour were Messrs. Simpson and Lynde, Great George-street, Westminster; resident engineer, Mr. David Bremner. A graving dock is in course of being constructed, and a second floating dock is to be executed.—The foundation-stone of the Gateshead Mechanics' Institute was laid on Monday week. It is to be built by Mr. Edward Bruce, of Gateshead, under the inspection of Messrs. Wardle and Walker, of Newcastle, the architects, who designed the building; cost of plans and superintendence, 42*l.*; cost of building, 840*l.*; site, 124*l.*; in all 1,000*l.* odds, of which 800*l.* have been realized.

Our shrewd Taunton 'Mechanic' led us a little astray, it seems, as to the architect of the Unitarian school there: instead of 'Mr. Ingle,' [in fact, in the M.S.,—pretty well written too,—we find it more like 'Mr. Jingle'] it should be Messrs. Fuller and Gingell of Bath.

ANCIENT FRISCONS DISCOVERED AND DESTROYED.—Some very early and fine specimens (?) of fresco paintings were recently discovered on removing a thick coat of whitewash from the inner walls of Shawell Church, Isle of Wight. These paintings probably covered the whole of the interior walls, as detached portions can be traced in different parts of the church. Some of them were extremely curious and interesting, but notwithstanding the efforts of members of the British Archaeological Association resident in the vicinity, they were ruthlessly destroyed even before tracings of several of them could be preserved, and the only record of so interesting a discovery is a fac-simile of others made by Mr. Denney, and now in the possession of the Archaeological Association, with a minute description read to the members. Why have not the names of the guilty parties been exposed to public comment?

COMPETITION.—An extension of time to 25th inst. has been announced for sending in plans, &c., for the new church at Brompton, in Kent, already advertised in THE BUILDER.

DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY.

MAY 26.—Mr. Boulton in the chair.—A paper on the decorations of Covent Garden Theatre, 1847, considered in their relation to art, was read by Mr. Laugher. The subject was introduced with observations upon the unsettled state of information which at present renders it difficult to arrive at definite conclusions respecting what, at first glance, may be deemed inconsistencies, deviations from certain hypothetical principles prevailing with reference to proper application of embellishment. It was said, that the laws affecting ornamental forms had been so generally disregarded and unlearned for during the last half century, as to have become nearly obsolete; and that, amid rapidly-increasing emanations of decorative art, of a profuse variety in growth and endurance, of colour, form, and value, many of the lofty and now permanent structures illustrate the advantages resulting from a careful study, together with a systematic culture and training, while as yet but little regard has been devoted to an artistic cultivation of the entangled under-wood shrubs, arcanthus, &c., which are promiscuously collected for the purpose of contributing to another class of interior decorations. On these considerations Mr. Laugher submitted, that his remarks should be received rather in the light of suggestions requiring critical investigations, than as a series of conclusions fairly deducible from established and recognized principles in the application of ornamental art. He then observed that in all cases of judicious management, it would be found that precedent or example had been respected whenever a completeness of form and harmony of parts had been attained; and he further contended that especial regard should be had whenever certain features became imbued with separate individualities and associations, as also when peculiar forms, counts, and expressions are identified and classed with strongly-marked distinctions and events of history. He maintained that while servile imitation is not commendable, it is not really so objectionable nor so offensive to an educated and reflecting man, as the disregard for and disturbance of his acquired impressions of the proprieties in characteristic associations. Architects, he said, had supported this feeling, with probably too much pedantry, but they rarely permitted a mixture of styles and characteristic allusions to occur without censure. How far this deference to precedent and style had been carried out by the architect who designed the decorations for Covent Garden Theatre would be detected in a glance; and having thus briefly alluded to them, he proceeded to show that a miscellaneous assemblage of incongruous, symbolical, or characteristic forms of ornament should always be avoided in design.

He then urged, at some length, what he considered to be questionable in the decoration of the new Theatre, especially the amount of gilding and the dark colour of the draperies, but admitted the many practical difficulties there were to be overcome, and said he was disposed to attribute some of what he considered defects to the necessity of using such available embellishments as the experience of the architect enabled him to collect instantaneously.

SINGULAR DISCOVERY IN MISSISSIPPI.—The *Louisville Journal*, in a recent article, says:—"In the south-western part of Franklin county, Mississippi, there is a platform or floor composed of brown stone, neatly polished, some three feet under ground. It is about 100 feet long, and 80 feet wide. It extends due north and south, and its surface is perfectly level. The masonry is said to be equal, if not superior, to any work of modern times. The land above it is cultivated; but thirty years ago it was covered with oak and pine trees, measuring from two to three feet in diameter. It is evidently of very remote antiquity, as the Indians who reside in the neighbourhood had no knowledge of its existence previous to its recent discovery. Nor is there any tradition among them from which we may form any idea of the object of the work, or of the people who were its builders. There is also a canal and well connected with it, but they have never been explored. A subterranean passage may be underneath. Further explorations may throw some light upon its origin."